

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0395
INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USMISSION SINAI
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 15188

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PINT EG
SUBJECT: IMPLICATIONS OF INTERNAL CRACKDOWN ON
- PEACE PROCESS

REF: CAIRO 14702

SUMMARY. VULNERABILITY OF SADAT TO INTERNAL CRITICISM
RUNS IN INVERSE PROPORTION TO PROGRESS ON PEACE FRONT
AND NO CRACKDOWN WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TAKEN PLACE IF
PEACE PROCESS MOVING FORWARD. IF CRACKDOWN SUCCEEDS,
SADAT'S NEGOTIATING POSITION PROBABLY SLIGHTLY
STRENGTHENED DOMESTICALLY, ALTHOUGH SATISFYING MILITARY
REMAINS MAJOR CONSTRAINT. SADAT'S PRESTIGE IN WEST
ALREADY DAMAGED AND LEFTISTS ATTEMPTING PROVOKE FURTHER
SEVERITY FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES. OTHER ANTI-SADAT
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ELEMENTS MAY ALSO EXPLOIT OPPORTUNITY. IN ISRAEL TOO
SOME MAY WISH TO USE CRACKDOWN TO DENIGRATE SADAT AS
NEGOTIATING PARTNER OR SEEK SEPARATE PEACE. ON BALANCE,
HOWEVER, UNLESS SITUATION DETERIORATES, WE DOUBT CRACK-
DOWN WILL HAVE SIGNIFICANT REPERCUSSIONS ON PEACE
PROCESS. END SUMMARY.

1. PEACE PROCESS AS CAUSE. STALLED PEACE PROCESS NOT IMMEDIATE CAUSE FOR CRACKDOWN--NOR EVEN MAJOR OPPOSITION CRITICISM OF SADAT--BUT IT IS BACKDROP OF ALL EVENTS IN EGYPT TODAY. PUBLIC'S CONCENTRATION OF DOMESTIC PROBLEMS AND VULNERABILITY OF SADAT TO CRITICISM RUNS IN INVERSE PROPORTION TO PROGRESS ON PEACE FRONT. IF PEACE PROCESS MOVING FORWARD, NO CRACKDOWN WOULD HAVE BEEN NECESSARY BECAUSE SADAT WOULD HAVE BEEN AS UNASSAILABLE TODAY AS HE WAS WHEN HE PERMITTED NEW WAFD TO BE LEGALIZED IN JANUARY 1978. SADAT'S FRUSTRATION AND FEELING OF HUMILIATION OVER ISRAEL'S FAILURE TO EITHER RESPOND TO HIS INITIATIVE OR TO CEASE ITS AGGRESSIVE POLICIES IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES ALSO PROBABLY CONTRIBUTED TO DECISION TO SILENCE CRITICS.

2. DOMESTICALLY, SADAT'S HAND STRENGTHENED. IF CRACKDOWN SUCCEEDS, SADAT'S ABILITY TO NEGOTIATE AND PERHAPS EVEN TO MAKE SOME MINOR CONCESSIONS WILL HAVE BEEN ENHANCED. ONE OF NASSERISTS' ALLEGATIONS IS CRACKDOWN TOOK PLACE TO PREPARE GROUNDWORK FOR SEPARATE SETTLEMENT. WE DO NOT SUBSCRIBE TO THIS THEORY, BUT IT INDICATES EVEN OPPONENTS GIVE SADAT CREDIT FOR NOW HAVING GREATER MANEUVERABILITY. HOWEVER, SADAT HAD FEW CONSTRAINTS IMPOSED BY CIVILIAN POPULACE AND THUS NOT MUCH HAS CHANGED. MAJOR CONSTRAINT REMAINS THE MILITARY. TO SATISFY THEM HE STILL, IN OUR VIEW, MUST GET ALL OF SINAI BACK WITH NO ISRAELI EXTRA-CONFIDENTIAL

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TERRITORIAL PROVISIONS AND SOMETHING "CREDIBLE" FOR THE PALESTINIANS AND ON OTHER FRONTS (NOT DO SO, IN THE ARMY'S VIEW, WOULD BE NEGATING ITS SACRIFICES OF THE LAST THIRTY YEARS).

3. EXTERNAL PRESTIGE SHAKEN. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT SADAT'S PRESTIGE IN THE U.S. AND THE WEST HAS SUFFERED. SADAT HIMSELF CONTRIBUTED TO THIS BY HAVING VAUNTED HIS LIBERALIZATION AS WESTERN-TYPE DEMOCRACY. AS NOTED REFTEL, LEFTISTS IN PARTICULAR RECOGNIZE VALUE FOR THEM OF EXTERNAL CRITICISM AND MAY ATTEMPT PROVOKE SEVERITY. FIRST CONCRETE EVIDENCE OF THIS WAS ANTI-SADAT PAMPHLET WHICH APPEARED JUNE 15 (CAIRO 15150). SADAT'S IMAGE AS LIBERAL LEADER HAS ALSO SUFFERED AS RESULT SIMPLISTIC APPROACH TAKEN BY WESTERN PRESS. NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL OF JUNE 9, FOR EXAMPLE, SINGLED OUT MOHAMED HUSSAYNAN HAYKAL AS RESPONSIBLE, LAW-ABIDING JOURNALIST WHO BEING PUNISHED FOR HIS COMMITMENT TO FREE PRESS. THIS IS A BIT THICK EVEN FOR HAYKAL ADMIRERS SINCE NO FREE PRESS AT ALL EXISTED UNDER HIS PATRON, NASSER. FINALLY, EXTREMIST PRO-ISRAELI GROUPS, WHO MAY WISH TO DISCREDIT SADAT, WILL PROBABLY SEIZE ON THESE INTERNAL

DEVELOPMENTS TO DO SO. HOW DIMINISHED SADAT'S IMAGE BECOMES WILL DEPEND ON FUTURE EVENTS. FOR NOW THERE IS CLEARLY A NET LOSS.

4. ISRAEL. WE DO NOT HAVE CLEAR READING OF ISRAELI REACTION TO INTERNAL CRACKDOWN, BUT SUSPECT THAT AT LEAST SOME ELEMENTS WILL USE IT TO DENIGRATE SADAT AS VALID NEGOTIATING PARTNER OR AS PROOF OF HIS "UNPREDICTABLE" BEHAVIOR, WHICH SEEMS TO BE FAVORITE ISRAELI THEME THESE DAYS. OTHERS MAY BELIEVE THEY SHOULD NOW HOLD OUT FOR SEPARATE PEACE. FOR RESPONSIBLE LEADERS, HOWEVER, WHO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 CAIRO 15188

MUST UNDERSTAND HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT IN WHICH CRACKDOWN TOOK PLACE, WE DOUBT THAT IT WILL BE ALLOWED TO INTERFERE WITH NEGOTIATIONS.

5. IN SHORT, UNLESS SITUATION DETERIORATES WE DOUBT THAT INTERNAL CRACKDOWN WILL HAVE SIGNIFICANT REPERCUSSIONS ON PEACE PROCESS. ALL PARTIES PREVIOUSLY COMMITTED TO SETTLEMENT IN THEIR OWN NATIONAL INTERESTS ARE UNLIKELY TO BE DIVERTED BY WHAT MAY BE ONLY A TEMPORARY SETBACK IN EGYPT'S ABORTIVE ATTEMPT TO TRANSFORM ITSELF INTO A MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY. EILTS

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